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REPORT OF THE COUNCIL.

SINCE the Annual Meeting of May 13, 1896, the Academy has lost by death seventeen members:—four Resident Fellows, Thomas Tracy Bouvé, Francis James Child, Benjamin Apthorp Gould, and Francis Amasa Walker; five Associate Fellows, George Brown Goode, Atticus Green Haygood, Matthew Carey Lea, Henry Newell Martin, and Hubert Anson Newton; and nine Foreign Honorary Members, Heinrich Ernst Beyrich, Ernst Curtius, Emil Heinrich Du-Bois Reymond, Hugo Glydén, Friedrich August Kekulé, Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, Jules Simon, James Joseph Sylvester, and Karl Weierstrass.

FRANCIS JAMES CHILD.

FRANCIS JAMES CHILD was born in Boston, on the 1st of February, 1825. His father was a sailmaker, one of that class of intelligent and independent mechanics which has had a large share in determining the character of our democratic community, as of old the same class had in Athens and in Florence. The boy was the youngest of five brothers and sisters. He was sent to the public schools. His unusual capacities were early displayed. He stood first in his classes, and was a favorite with his schoolfellows. At the English High School he won all the prizes, and having by chance attracted the attention of our venerable fellow citizen, Mr. Epes S. Dixwell, then the Master of the Latin School, his father was induced, at Mr. Dixwell's suggestion, to allow him to proceed to the Latin School, that he might continue his studies and be prepared for entrance to college. He speedily caught up with the boys who had already made progress in the study of Greek and Latin, and soon took the first place here, as he had done in the schools which he had previously attended. The sweetness of his disposition, the pleasant mingling in his nature of gay spirits and serious purpose, his high principles, his unaffected modesty won the affection of his teachers and of his comrades. His superiority in

his classes was so unmingled with pretension or conceit, that it was admitted without question or envy. Mr. Dixwell became strongly attached to him, and, in view of the great promise of his talents and his character, secured the means for his support in college, which he entered in the autumn of 1842.* Harvard was then still a comparatively small institution, with no claims to the title of University; but she had her traditions of good learning as an inspiration for the studious youth, and still better she had teachers who were examples of devotion to intellectual pursuits, and who cared for those ends the attainment of which makes life worth living. Josiah Quincy was approaching the close of his term of service as President of the College, and stood before the eyes of the students as the type of a great public servant, embodying the spirit of patriotism, of integrity, and of fidelity in the discharge of whatever duty he might be called to perform. Among the Professors were Walker, Felton, Peirce, Channing, Beck, and Longfellow, men of utmost variety of temperament, but each an instructor who secured the respect no less than the gratitude of his pupils.

The Class to which Child belonged numbered hardly over sixty. The prescribed course of study which was then the rule brought all the members of the Class together in recitations and lectures, and every man soon knew the relative standing of each of his fellows. Child at once took the lead and kept it. His excellence was not confined to any one special branch of study, he was equally superior in all. He was the best in the classics, he was Peirce's favorite in mathematics, he wrote better English than any of his classmates. His intellectual interests were wider than theirs, he was a great reader and his tastes in reading were mature. He read for amusement as well as for learning, but he did not waste his time or dissipate his mental energies over worthless or pernicious books. He made good use of the social no less than of the intellectual opportunities which college life affords, and became as great a favorite with his classmates as he had been with his schoolfellows.

The close of his college course was marked by the exceptional distinction of his being chosen by his classmates as their Orator, and by his having the first part at Commencement as the highest scholar in the Class. His Class Oration was remarkable for its maturity of thought and of style. Its manliness of spirit, its simple directness of presentation

* The pecuniary debt thus incurred was afterwards paid with interest. But though only thus could Mr. Child's spirit of independence be satisfied, he cherished through life the most grateful affection for the friend who had thus served him.

of the true objects of life, and of the motives by which the educated man, whatever might be his chosen career, should be inspired, together with the serious and eloquent earnestness with which it was delivered, gave to his discourse peculiar impressiveness and effect.*

Immediately upon his graduation he was appointed Tutor in the College, with duties of instruction in English. To the study of the English language and literature he was led by taste, and his knowledge was already considerable in this wide field, to the cultivation of which the remainder of his life was to be in great part devoted, and in which he was to become an acknowledged master. In 1848 he published his first work, an edition in one volume of "Four Old Plays," all of the sixteenth century, and of interest to the student of the development of the English drama as exhibiting its conditions immediately before its splendid manifestation in the works of the Elizabethan playwrights. Nothing of the kind had been done previously in America. The volume appealed to but a small class of readers, but, with those who were competent to judge of it, it established the reputation of its editor as a scholar of more than usual competence of learning and sobriety of judgment.

In 1851, on the resignation of Professor Channing as Boylston Professor of Rhetoric, Child was appointed his successor with leave of absence for study in Europe, before assuming the duties of the position. The opportunities which Europe then afforded to the young American scholar were diligently made use of. He obtained the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Göttingen in 1854, and in the autumn of the same year he returned to his work at Harvard. A great part of his time was employed in the teaching of English composition, and the drudgery of correcting students' exercises, but he had an indefatigable industry and a steady ardor of learning, and he found time to carry on his own special studies. He undertook the general superintendence of a series of the works of the chief British Poets, and himself prepared for it the edition of Spencer (1855) in five volumes, which for the use of the general reader still remains the best. For the same series he compiled a Collection of Ballads in eight volumes, published in 1857-58, which in extent of range, in judgment in selection, and in thoroughness of literary and historical illustration, was far superior to any preceding similar

* An eminent living graduate of Harvard, who was present on the occasion, having come to Cambridge to take his entrance examination, has said that he received from that oration his first vivid sense of the dignity of intellectual pursuits, and his first strong impulse to devote himself to them.

work. But a more important piece of work, one of original investigation and displaying "wonderful industry, acuteness, and accuracy,"* was the treatise issued in the *Memoirs of our Academy* in 1862 under the modest title of "Observations on the Language of Chaucer,"† which was followed in 1868 by a Supplement, entitled "Observations on the Language of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*."‡ "It is difficult at the present day," says Professor Kittredge, "to imagine the state of Chaucer philology at the moment when this paper appeared. Scarcely anything, we may say, was known of Chaucer's grammar and metre in a sure and scientific way. Indeed, the difficulties to be solved had not even been clearly formulated. . . . Mr. Child not only defined the problems, but provided for most of them a solution which the researches of younger scholars have only served to substantiate. He also gave a perfect model of the method proper to such investigations, — a method simple, laborious, and exact."§

For many years after this Mr. Child published little, but with steady purpose devoted such leisure as his incessant professional task allowed to the extension of the vast stores of his learning, and to the accumulation of the material for the main work of his life, a complete critical edition of "The English and Scottish Ballads." At length in 1882 appeared the first part of his work. The character of the undertaking was set forth in a prospectus. The popular Ballads existing in the English language had never been collected into one body; a large portion of the remains of the ballads was unprinted; the text of much that was in print was vitiated by editorial changes; it was now proposed to publish all in their entirety and their purity; to include every independent version of every ballad, and to record all important variations of different copies, both printed and manuscript; each ballad was to have a proper Preface, and in the case of those ballads which the English have in common with other nations an account was to be given of related traditions. The work was to be completed by a general introduction, a glossary, and indexes. The vast scale of this matured design became obvious on the publication of the first part. The large range of the themes of the ballads, the immense variety of local, historical, and romantic tradition

* These are the terms used by Mr. A. J. Ellis, the learned author of the *History of English Pronunciation*.

† *Memoirs of the American Academy*, New Series, Vol. VIII. pp. 445-502.

‡ *Ibid.*, Vol. IX. pp. 265-315.

§ From the admirable appreciation of Professor Child's character and works in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December, 1896.

exhibited by them, the wide diffusion among the nations of Europe of the legends which many of them embodied, opened a field of investigation of enormous extent, requiring acquaintance alike with many languages and many literatures. The task was one with which only a scholar possessed of exceptional acquisitions could hope to accomplish satisfactorily, and from which even the most industrious might have shrunk. It had hardly a parallel in the variety of learning which it exacted for its due performance, but this was not all; it demanded in no less measure fine critical acumen and poetic appreciation, — the gifts of taste and culture as well as of scholarship. Mr. Child possessed them all.

"It was my wish," he said, in the Advertisement prefixed to the first part, "not to begin to print *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, until this unrestricted title should be justified by my having at command every valuable copy of every known ballad. . . . What is still lacking is believed to bear no great proportion to what is in hand. . . . Meanwhile the uncertainties of the world forbid a longer delay to publish so much as has been got together."

From year to year the parts followed in rapid succession, — rapid in view of the character of the work, — and in the Advertisement to Part IX., which appeared in the spring of 1894, Mr. Child had the satisfaction of saying that, to the extent of his knowledge of sources the collection was complete, with the exception of a single ballad, "which is probably a variety of one or another here given in several forms." Such had been the extraordinary success of his research, in which he had been aided by many English and foreign scholars glad to assist in the perfecting of a work which was of interest to them in itself, and which roused their admiration by the manner in which it was executed.

The body of the work was complete; but one more part was needed, to contain a general Introduction, a Glossary, and Indexes. In spite of failing health Mr. Child set himself resolutely to the drudgery involved in this task. To the last month of his life he labored steadily, but with a sense of weariness to which he had been unused. With the exception of the Introduction the task was mainly accomplished, and the work was left in such condition that it could be taken up and carried through by the most competent hands next to Mr. Child's own, those of his disciple, assistant, and friend, Professor Kittredge.

The year 1895-96 completed the fiftieth year of Mr. Child's service in the University. It was a matter of satisfaction to him that during its course he had been able, in spite of physical infirmity, to meet his classes without the omission of a single lecture. The College year ended in

June. He took no vacation, but busied himself in his study, and found pleasure in his garden of roses. In August he became seriously ill, and on the 11th of September he died.

Mr. Child's fame as a scholar is secure. His work is so done that it can never be superseded. But to those who had the happiness of intimacy with him, his learning and all that he accomplished seem but as secondary and accessory to the essential qualities of his character and his manner of life. The sedentary nature of his occupations, and their narrow material confines within the limits of a University helped to preserve the strongly marked and altogether delightful originality of his nature from the pressure and attrition of the world, which speedily wear down the marks of distinctive individuality and shape the mass of men into a general dull uniformity. He had a most sympathetic and tender heart, so easily touched that its impulses might sometimes have overcome the restraint of good judgment, had they not been encountered by his keen, kindly, and lively humor, which, while it generally saved him from sentimental extravagances, yet became often the inciter and ally of his liberal sympathies. His charity might be abused, but his pity included even the most open of impostors, and, taking a humorous enjoyment in the success of deceptions practiced upon himself, he chose rather to aid the undeserving than to let a single deserving needy man go by unhelped.

The same liberality of disposition was manifest in his relations to all whom he could assist in literary or scholarly work. He made a friend of every young scholar who sought from him advice or direction, and gave his time willingly to serve interests not his own. He could be merciless with pretenders, but he was marvellously patient with unpretending and innocent incompetence.

With the highest sense of the duties and the privileges of his calling, he did not regard them as exempting him from the discharge of the common duties of a citizen. He did not bury himself in his books, and he had nothing of the indifference of a recluse to the affairs of the community in which he lived. His feelings were strong and his judgment was sound in regard to the matters affecting public interests. His opinions carried weight, for they were based on principles and maintained with clear intelligence and ready wit. If roused by argument, no one was his match in the flash of wit and the play of humor. He took the part of a good citizen in local politics; he was for many years an active member and officer in local charities, and he served his term as a member of the School Committee. At the time of the civil war he threw himself with ardor into the service of the cause to which so many of the youth of Har-

vard, dear to him, were devoting themselves. He cherished with peculiar tenderness the memory of those who fell in the war. He was the main promoter of the two precious volumes of Harvard Memorial Biographies; and on the walls of his study, always before his eyes, close by the portraits of his old masters in learning, the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, were those of his young heroic friends, the brothers Charles and James Lowell.

His fidelity in the discharge of the exacting duties of his professorship was complete. For far too many years far too much of his time was occupied in the correction of students' themes. He never shirked this wearisome drudgery. No teacher was ever more exacting of himself in the discharge of his regular duties. In the later years of his life, when he suffered much from gout and rheumatism, he did not allow pain or depression of spirits to interfere with the regular discharge of his task as instructor.

Even the dullest and most careless undergraduate could hardly fail to be quickened and improved by such teaching as Mr. Child's. Here was a master of most accurate and extensive learning, a scholar of unwearied diligence and exact method, with the faculties and sympathies which enabled him to impart his learning to his pupils, and to inspire in the more capable among them something of his own enthusiasm for the best in literature and life.

It is impossible not to regret that Mr. Child should not have done more independent literary work. The several introductions to the Ballads in his great collection, excellent as they are in their kind, very seldom afford him free space for the display of his own genius; but they abound in touches which light up the page with gleams of fancy or of humor, and more rarely with a flash of poetic imagination that reveals the restraint which the editor had imposed upon himself. His style when at freedom was of the best, — for it was the simple expression of the man himself.

Original, quaint, humorous, sweet, sympathetic, tender-hearted, faithful, — these are the terms which first come to mind in describing him; the traits that these terms imply included all his intelligence, gave character to his work, and made his learning the least part of him.

Those who knew him best think of him mainly as one who had the gift of love. He was a lover of nature, of poetry, of roses, of all that was fair and sweet and good; above all he was a lover of his fellow men. When he died the world lost much more than one of its great scholars.

C. E. NORTON.

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ERRATUM.

On page 333, line five, of the Memoir of Francis James Child, for "The boy was the youngest," etc., read: "The boy was the third in a family of eight brothers and sisters."